(b) if so, whether any discussions have been held between the Government of India and the Government of Iran in this regard; and

(c) if so, the details of the discussion?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) in the first meeting of the India-Iran Joint Woking Group (JWG) held on 8-9 May, 2003 in New Delhi and 11-12 May, 2003 in Tehran, the Iranian side agreed to negotiate awarding a discovered and a semi-discovered Iranian oilfield to an Indian public sector oil company, subject to technical and commercial competitiveness. In a subsequent bilateral discussions between the Minister of Petroleum of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Secretary, Petroleum and Natural Gas, Government of India during the 9th International Energy Forum (IEF) meeting held in Amsterdam on 23rd May, 2004, the Iranian Minister offered 20% share in Khushk and Hosseinieh Field (jointly termed as the "Yadavaran Field") to OVL.

Also, in a meeting between the Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Government of India and the Minister of Petroleum, Islamic Republic of Iran, in Vienna on 16.9.2004, the Iranian side offered 20% of the rights and obligations of the service contract between the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) and a third party to the Indian consortium in the Yadavaran Oilfield out of the reserved part of the rights and obligations.

The technical data for the field is being collected and on the basis of techno-economic parameters the negotiations are continuing.

Roll back of prices of Diesel and LPG

525. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering to roll back the prices of Diesel and LPG to benefit the common man;

(b) if not, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether it is a fact that allies of Government are also demanding cut in the prices of diesel and LPG; and

(d) if so, what is Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) and (b) Government are constantly monitoring and keeping under careful review the prices of all sensitive petroleum products.

Considering India's high dependence on oil imports, the increase in international prices does impact on the domestic consumer prices of petroleum products. However, steps have been taken to contain the impact of such increases in the domestic consumer prices of four major products, viz., PDS kerosene, domestice LPG, diesel and petrol. The Government had reduced excise duties and customs duties on petrol, diesel, PDS kerosene and Domestic LPG.

PDS kerosene and domestic LPG are subsidized products. In addition to the Government subsidy, oil PSUs have been sharing the burden by not passing the full increase in international prices on to the domestic consumer prices of these products. Despite the steep increase in international prices, the selling price of PDS kerosene has not been increased since 1.4.2002 and the RSP of domestic LPG was increased by only Rs. 20/cylinder each, effective 16.6.2004 and 5.11.2004 respectively. The oil PSUs have suffered under-recoveries of around Rs. 7,760 crore during the first half of 2004-05 on account of these two products.

In addition, oil PSUs have suffered under-recoveries during 2004-05 on account of non-revision in the domestic consumer prices of petrol and diesel in line with the international prices.

(c) and (d) Government are in constant dialogue with coalition partners in the UPA and outside supporters on issues relating to the prices of sensitive petroleum products.

Safety in ONGC

526. SHRI M.A.M. RAMASWAMY: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether an ONGC helicopter crashed in the Arabian Sea on the 11th August, 2004;

(b) if so, the reasons for this crash and the number of people who lost their lives in this crash;

(c) whether Government have paid any compensation to the kiths and kins of the victims of this crash;

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor; and